

# Module A: *Texts in Time*

*Frankenstein* and *Blade Runner*

*What piece of work is a man?'*

*"Art at its most significant is a distant early warning system that can always be relied on to tell the old culture what is beginning to happen" Marshall McLuhan.*

Both texts explore a dilemma that continues to resonate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the ethical and moral tension between humanity's quest to push the boundaries and the subsequent loss of core values.

*'What piece of work is a man?'*

# HSC Rubric

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate understanding of the **meanings** of a pair of texts when considered **together**
- **evaluate** the **relationships** between texts and **contexts**
- organise, develop and express **ideas** using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form

# HSC Feedback

- *“These responses embedded an evaluation of the relationship between text and context in the analysis of the texts”*
- *“incorporated an analysis of the ways in which a comparative study invited deeper understanding of the concepts suggested by the question”*
- *“clear understanding of how context influenced the values and ideas in both texts”*

# Texts in Times

- **Similar content:** Humanity using technology to challenge nature and the limitations of life, and humanity's propensity for obsession provide the narrative frame for both texts.
- **Framing the response:**
  - A range of theses or lines of arguments
  - Grounded in context, times and values
  - Integrated through the meaning conveyed by the consideration of characterisation, setting, language features, ideas, etc in both texts.

# Texts in Time

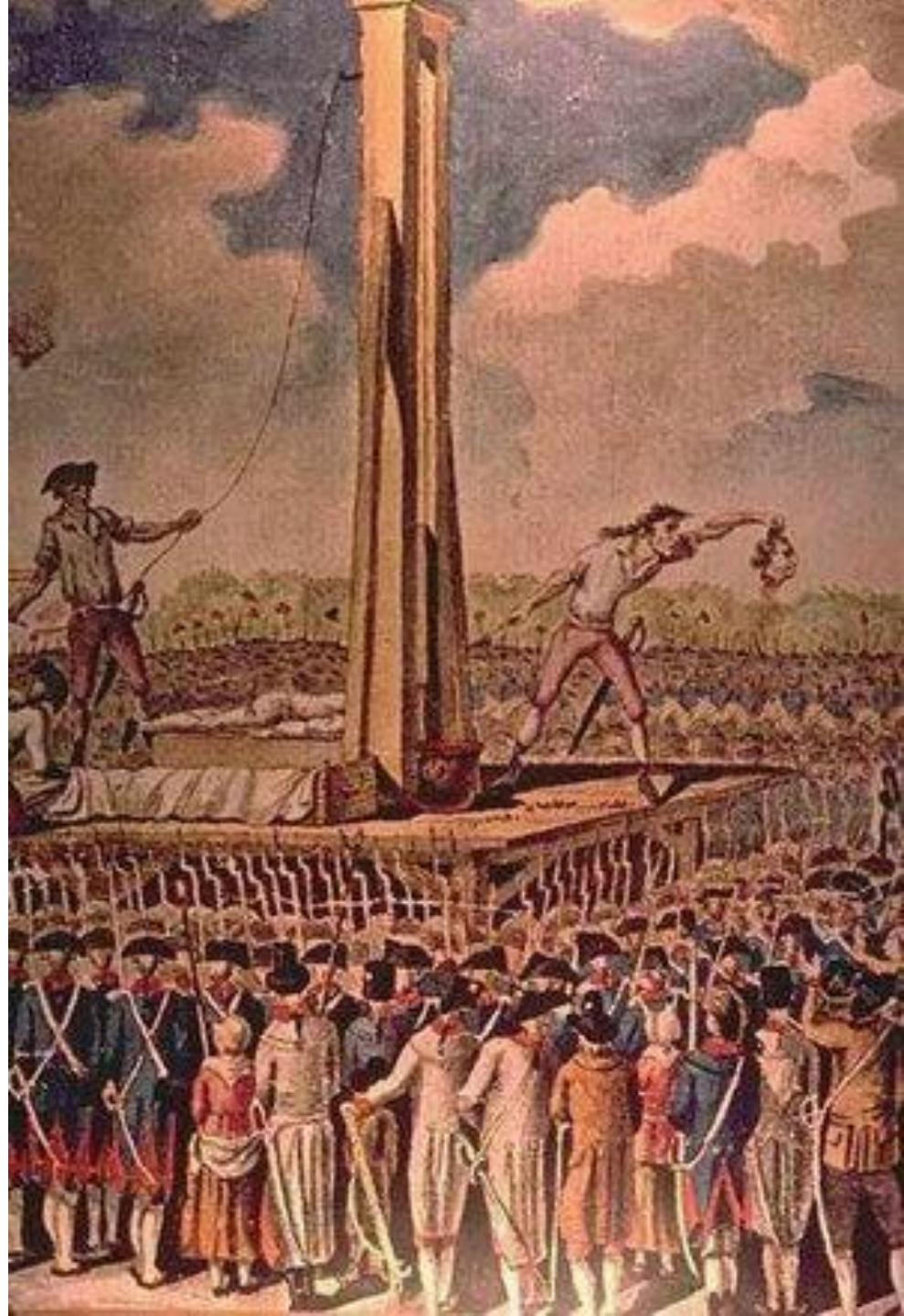
- **Framing the response:**
  - The ethical and moral dilemma explored by both texts provides you with fertile ground for crafting an integrated comparison and contrast that considers explicitly the influence of times, **contexts** and **values**
  - The **creators** and the **creations**
  - The **director** and the **observer**
  - **The ideas:** mortality, obsession, humanity, identity, morality, exploitation...
  - Leading to what you have discovered about these ideas after considering **BOTH** texts!



# Political Context

## *Frankenstein:*

- American Civil War and later the French revolution: Freedom vs. inhumanity
- In England the time of revolution was one of fear. As a result, a number of strict laws were passed in an attempt to secure the nation's stability. Prime Minister Spencer Perceval was assassinated in 1812



# Political Context

## *Blade Runner:*

- Vietnam War had left a nation disillusioned and cynical.
- President Reagan implementing economic rationalism that led to high levels of unemployment and the removal of welfare support. Recession 1980-1982.
- Assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan on March 30, 1981 by John Hinckley
- Growth of Asia's economic power.





# Cultural Context

- **Romanticism vs. Enlightenment:** Freedom of thought and expression, spontaneity, individuality, a celebration of nature and a belief that anything was possible vs. reason and scientific rationalism.
- **Gothic Genre:** Fascination with supernatural.



# Cultural Context

## *Blade Runner:*

- Product of postmodernity questioning of authority, power and truth; reflecting the cynicism and loss of faith that followed the dropping of the atomic bomb.
- Globalisation: No perceivable geographical or historical centre evident in film.
- Contradictory mélange of genres suggests ideological confusion and conflict: Blend of the western, sci fi, neo-expressionism, romanticism and tech noir.



# Social Context

## *Frankenstein:*

- The Enlightenment freed science from the trammels of theological tradition leading to extraordinary scientific discoveries .
- John Locke: "Tabula Rasa," the idea that the mind is a "blank slate" when we are born.
- Societal transformation with an industrial revolution and a working class society demanding to be heard – exploitation of workers.
- Women subjugated and marginalised - no right to vote and limited legal rights.





# Social Context

## ***Blade Runner:***

- Large multinational companies vying for economic control
- Extinction of many natural species, the threat of acid rain and global warming  
- Scott: *'I was always aware that this whole Earth is on overload. I've been that way for 30 years.'*
- A rally against nuclear weapons draws 750,000 to New York City's Central Park.
- Commodore 64 is released and the 1st launch of a space shuttle (Columbia)
- The first artificial heart transplant takes place
- Women: Birth of the femme-fatale after WWII.



# Values

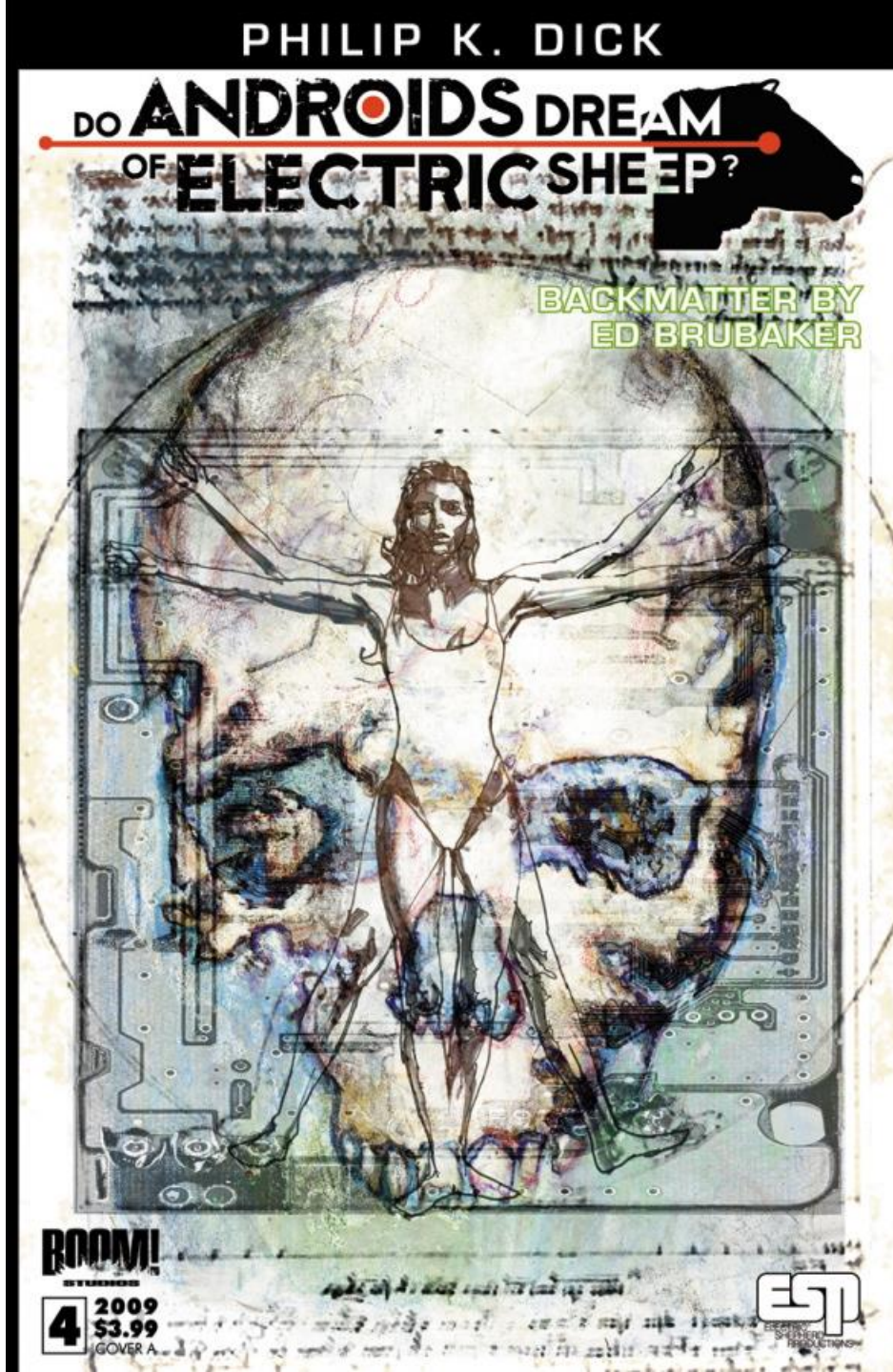
- **Shelley:** Compassion, community and family, moderation, truth, beauty and integrity.
- Frankenstein spurns companionship and does not have the moral strength or the integrity to deal with what he has created and the consequences of his actions.





# Values

- Compassion
- Moderation
- Empathy
- Love
- Community
- Humility
- Integrity



# Conscience & Responsibility

- Frankenstein transgresses the boundaries of nature and ignores familial duty in his pursuit of scientific accolades. *'How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind.'*
- Tyrell feels no moral or ethical responsibility - *'you've burnt so brightly Roy.'*



# Hubris/Myopia

- Shelley is critical of the arrogance of the Romantic imagination that privileges the individual over the community.
- Shelley's obsession with eyes reflects a preoccupation with the ethical vision of humanity – *'warm tears filled my eyes, which I hastily wiped away, that they might not intercept the view I had of the daemon: but still my sight was dimmed...'*
- The act of seeing is inseparable from moral vision in *Blade Runner*. The Voight-Kompft Test is a motif for subjective consciousness and the moral vision of humanity.
- Tyrell's myopic physical and moral short-sightedness reflects his arrogance and pride. Even the camera's gaze demands the viewer to question their own humanity.



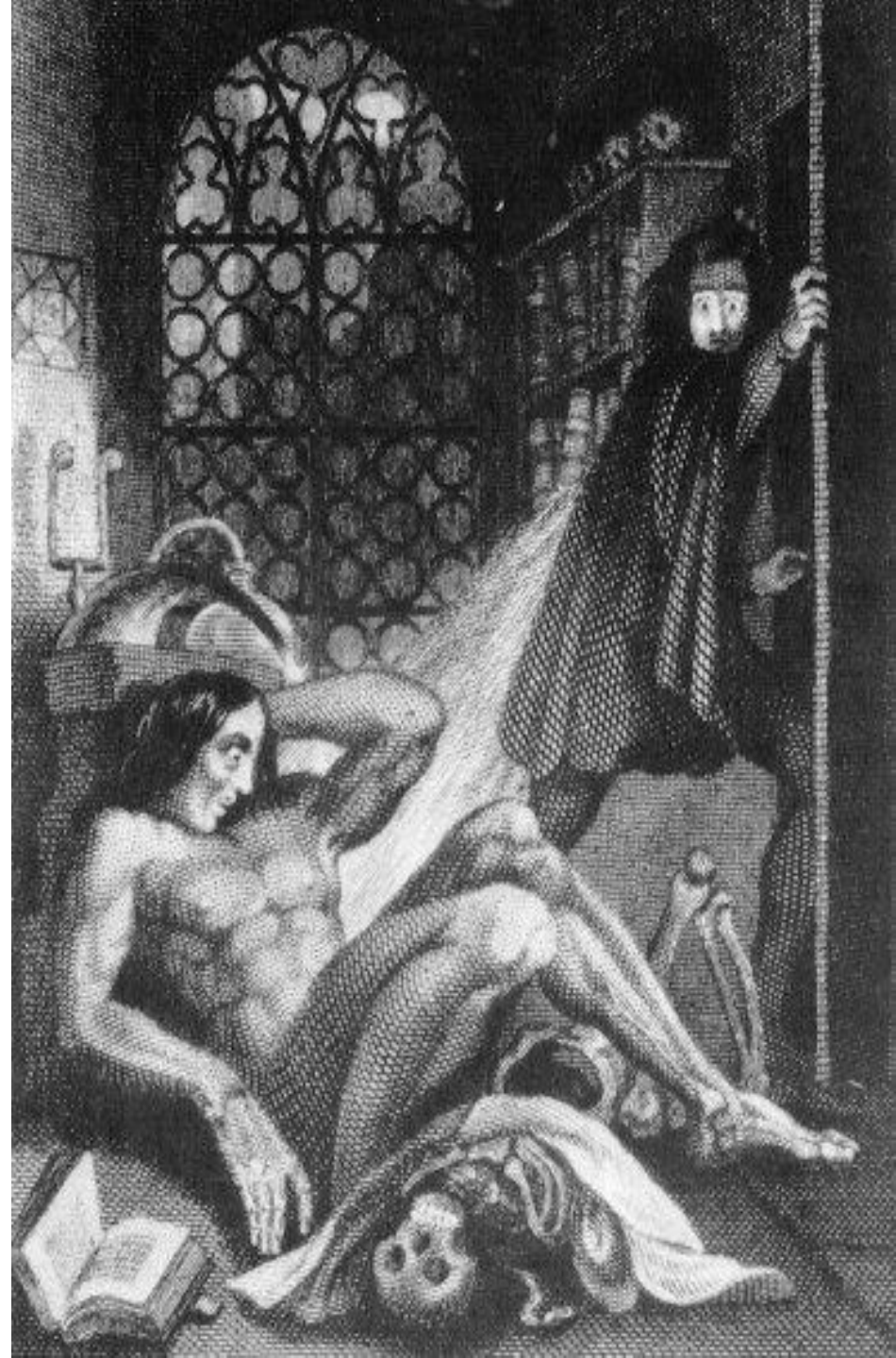


# Humanity

- Both texts privilege empathy as the distinctively human trait, the basis of morality and solidarity with one's fellow beings.
- Shelley makes us aware that our humanity is defined by our relationships with others. Walton, Frankenstein and Tyrell's obsessions are lonely pursuits. Henry Clerval epitomises compassion and kindness. *'Could aught ill entrench on the noble spirit of Clerval? So perfectly humane, so thoughtful in his generosity - so full of kindness and tenderness amidst his passion for adventurous exploit.'*
- Tyrell's cold, indifferent attitude to Rachel is a reflection of the calculating inhumanity of the corporate capitalist. The politicisation of language and the commodification of the post-industrial world threaten the value and special significance given to humanity.
- Roy displays the most enlightened and transcendent of all human emotions, compassion and integrity. Like a Christ-like figure, Batty dies for the sins of humanity.

# Identity

- In both texts there is a blurring of what it means to be human.
- The wretch and the replicants are more human in their behaviour than their creators.
- Deckard begins to question what it means to be human. Even Tyrell states that the replicants are *'more human than human.'*
- Pris: *'I think, Sebastian, therefore I am'.* Descartes saw the clear dividing line that existed between humans and animals as the ability to think self-reflexively, a key philosophical element that defines sentient nature





# The Thesis or Line of Argument

- The ideas/understanding you have gained from your study of both texts in terms of context, values and ideas.
- These ideas/concepts become the framework and drivers for your response.
- Your thesis integrates your response!
- Respond immediately to the question or statement. You could agree or challenge it.
- Develop a thesis or line of argument that relates to the question or statement and sustain this throughout your response.
- Use both texts to support or challenge your thesis.
- Developed and supported by judicious textual analysis.

- “The crafting of the setting in a text is crucial as it provides a framework for the intended meaning of the composer.” Explore the significance of the setting in *Frankenstein* and *Blade Runner*.

Describe the settings: compare and contrast, and consider the purpose and meaning of the settings.

Discuss the context and values and what is being said about life in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Analyse in an integrated comparison and contrast the characters who move in these worlds, such as the creators and the creations , and the ideas that are conveyed.

Discuss what meaning you have gained after a consideration of the significance of setting in both texts.

# The Thesis

- The crafting of the setting in a text is salient as it provides a literal and metaphorical framework for the world the characters move in, and the intended meaning being conveyed to an audience.



# Setting

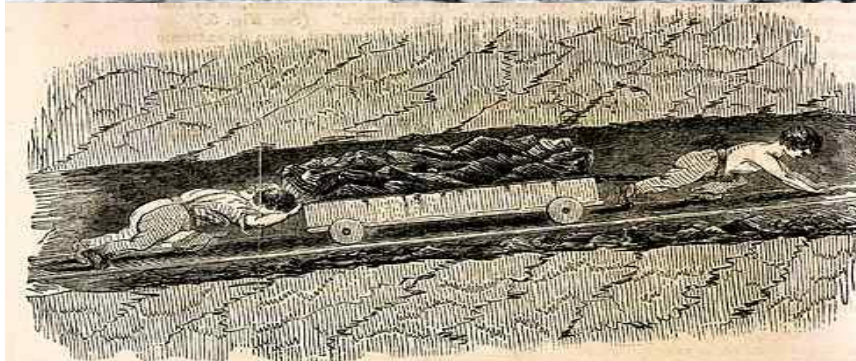
- While the setting of *Frankenstein* still has moments of great beauty and striking descriptions of the natural world, the universe we see in *Blade Runner* – 200 years later – has become the world that Frankenstein feared would arise if he created a female partner for his monster. There is only ugliness and despair: “...a race of devils would be propagated on the earth who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror” (p. 170).





# Context & Values

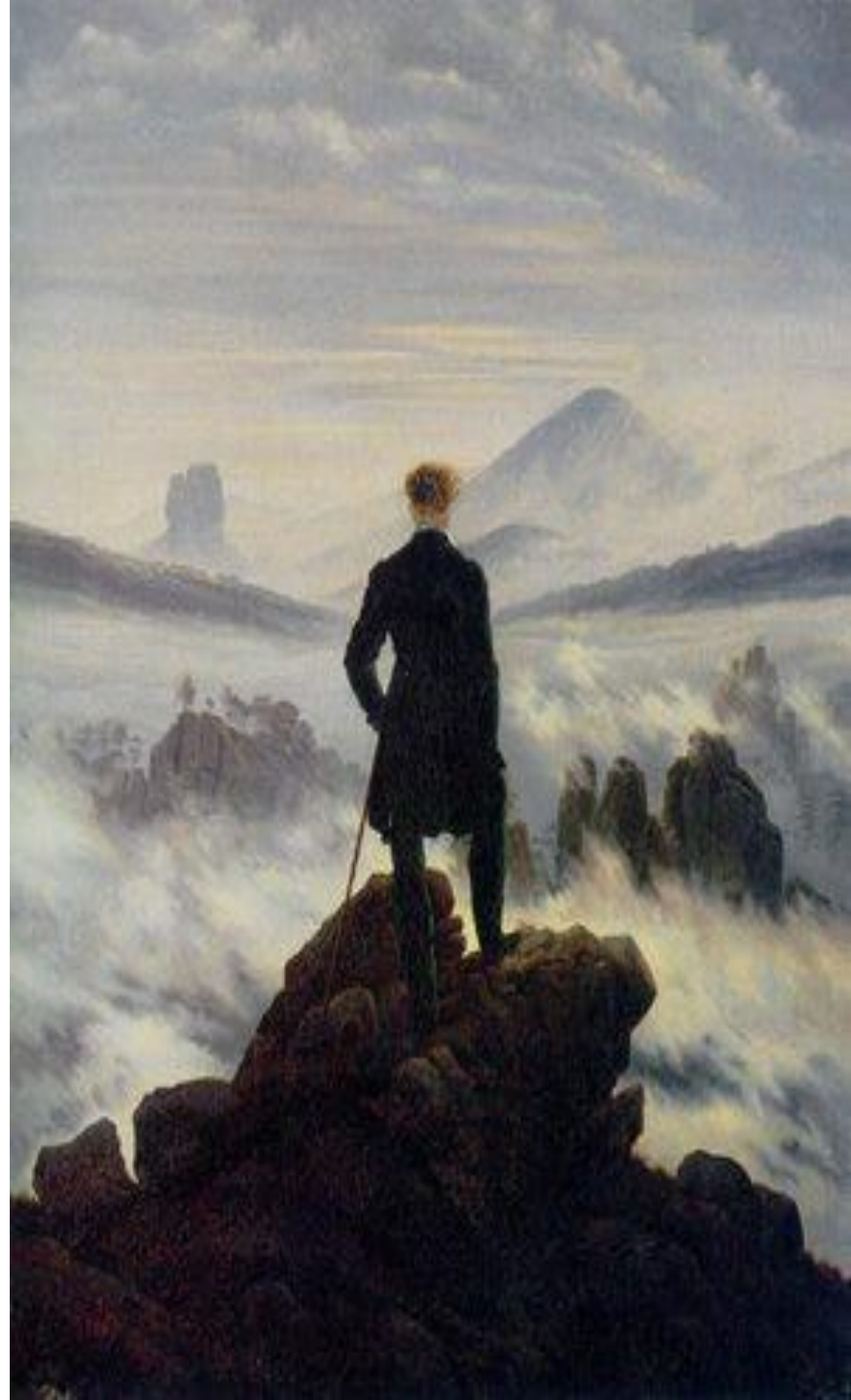
- *Frankenstein* early 19<sup>th</sup> C:
  - London industrialised, polluted, dank and dark
  - Poverty, crime and child labour
  - Industrial revolution and increased interest in what it is to be human
  - Women subjugated
  - **Values:** enterprise, individualism, freedom





# Setting

- Shelley creates a setting of contrasts between light and warmth, and cold and darkness. The novel immerses you in the icy Arctic in the opening and in the closing chapter.
- The physical setting is subsumed by the psychological mindscape of Frankenstein and his monster.



# Context & Values

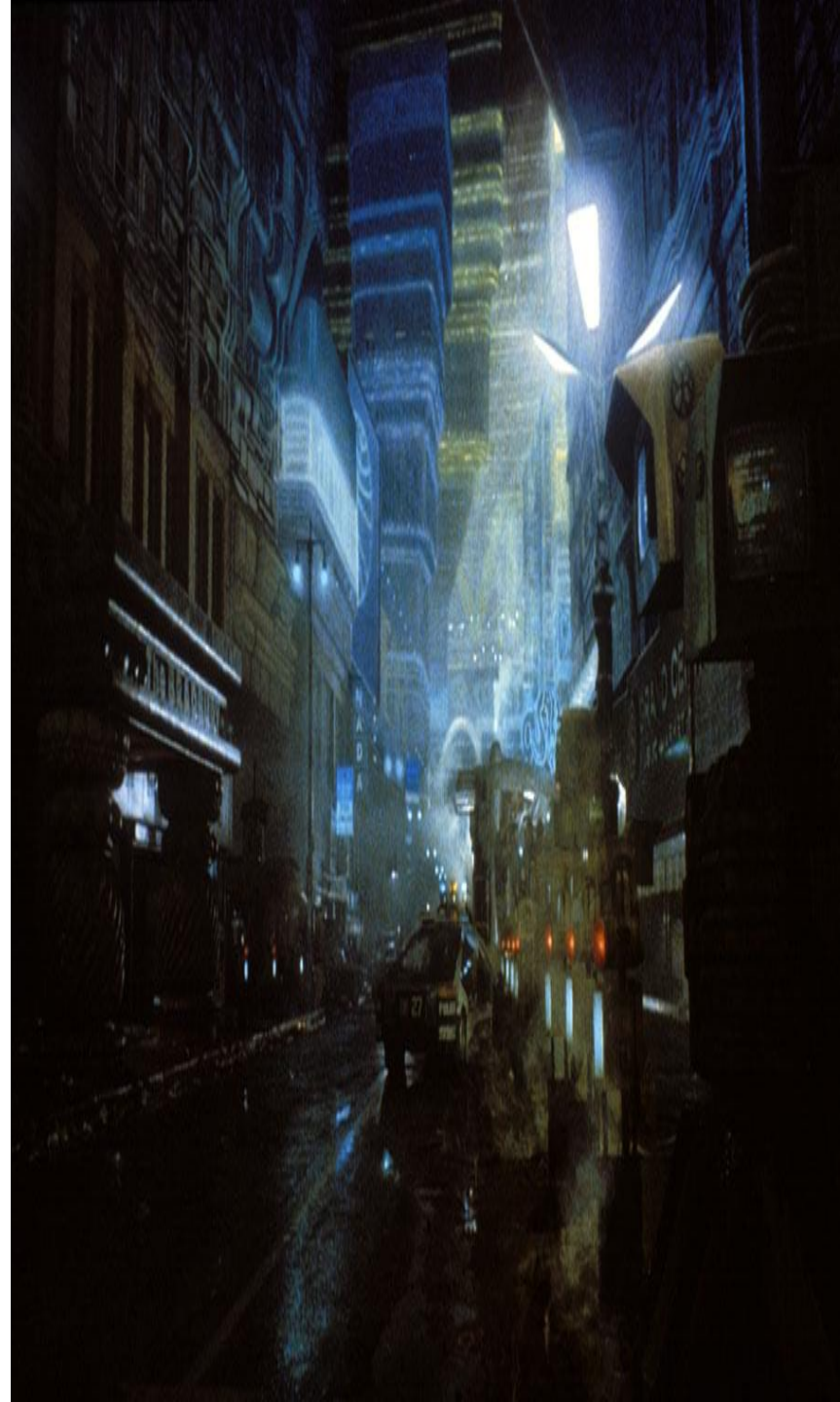
## *Blade Runner:*

- Multinationals
- Worst depression since 1929 – high unemployment
- Fear of atomic warfare – peaceful demonstrations
- Invasion of Lebanon
- Pollution and acid rain
- Technology fast tracking
- **Values:** Individualism, liberalism, democracy



# Setting

- Dystopian, dark world of acid rain, pollution and devoid of natural light.
- Oil refinery stacks belch flames, symbolically signifying hell.
- The city, with its composite of time and place and its references, through architecture and fashions, to the 40s, conjures up memories of WWII & Nazi Germany.





# The Creators

- Both the 'creators' in *Frankenstein* and *Blade Runner* reflect the new emerging world they move in. The setting has provided them with the means and the motives to embrace the technologies. They have pandered to individualism and they lack insight, humility and empathy. They are egocentric and indifferent to the needs and feelings of their creations. Tyrell is what Frankenstein feared he would become if he made a female monster.



# The Creators

- Frankenstein's ego, self-delusion and obsession with immortality cause tragedy and suffering.
- His inexorable desire to embrace new technologies and create life, leads to a self-imposed exile. He abandons his family and his values of honesty and integrity, but he does come to realise the tragic ramifications of his ambitions – *'how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge'*





# The Creators

- Dr Eldon Tyrell is a remote and god-like individual who represents corporate greed, ambition and the willingness to sacrifice morality and humanity.
- Blind to the needs and feelings of his creations.
- He is not horrified by his creations like Frankenstein; rather he delights in his own handiwork.



*"Commerce is our goal here at Tyrell..."*



- “Both *Blade Runner* and *Frankenstein* question what it means to be human.” Evaluate how this question is explored in both texts and what meaning you have arrived at from this evaluation.

Discuss the context and values and what is being said about humanity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century

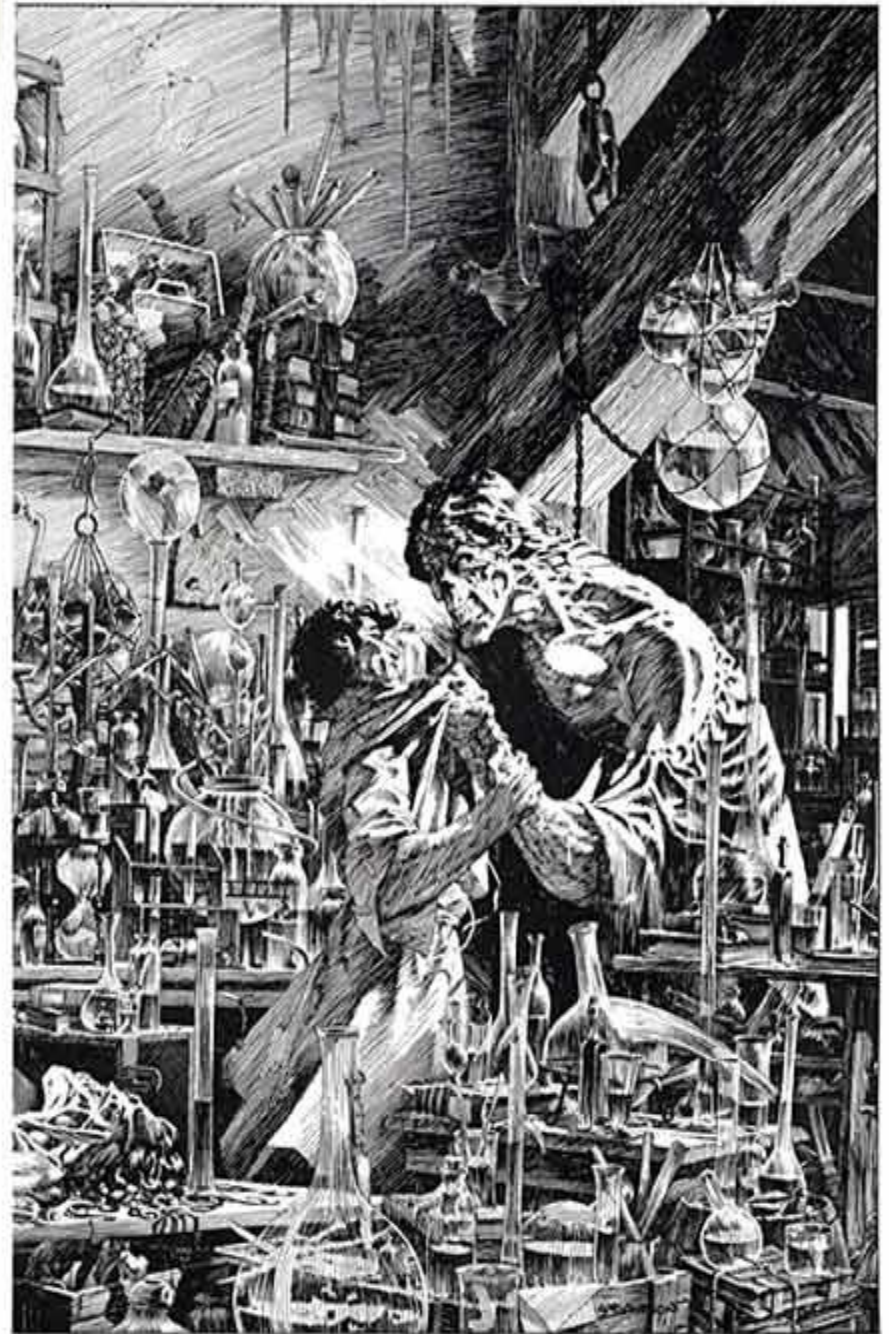
Humanity : imagination and intelligence, flawed, mortality, relationships, empathy and love

Analyse in an integrated comparison and contrast the creators and the creations , and the ideas that are conveyed about what it means to be human.

Discuss what meaning you have gained after an evaluation of what it means to be human in both texts.

# Thesis

- Both texts, through their representation of the lack of humanity in the creators, and the very human qualities and flaws of the creations, raise the question about what is a human.



"... I shall be with you on your wedding night."

# Context and Values

## *Frankenstein*

- **Romantics:** Freedom, individuality, sublime nature
- **Industrial Age:** expansion, child labour, slavery, enterprise, profit, technology, low life expectancy, crime
- **Religion and Morals:** conservative but decline of religion and morality
- **Women:** suppressed , death in child birth

## *Blade Runner*

- **Multinationals:** profit, advancement, enterprise
- **Postmodern world:** atomic warfare, evil, transitory nature of life, power struggle
- **Technology:** prolonging life, robotics, personal computers, weapons of war



# The Creators

## Frankenstein

- **Victor:** rebellious, intelligent, ambitious and driven, god-like
- *"Prometheus was a fool. The gods were jealous, greedy and possessive."*
- *"When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone."*

## Blade Runner

- Tyrell: ambitious, blind, ignorant, cruel and lacks compassion.
- *"Commerce is our goal here at Tyrell; more human than human is our motto!"*
- A remote and god-like individual who resides in the penthouse floor of his corporation.
- Tyrell cannot conceive why replicants would expect to live beyond their predetermined life span of four years.

# The Creations

- The 'creations' of this technology in both texts raise many significant moral and ethical questions about what it is to be human. In *Frankenstein*, the monster is represented sympathetically as being intelligent and sensitive, but his experiences with humanity transform him into a dark creature. In *Blade Runner*, the opposite occurs as when we first meet the replicants they are cast in the role of villain, yet as the narrative unfolds we develop empathy for their plight. Despite their terrible deeds we realise that at times they were more human than their creators.

# Creations

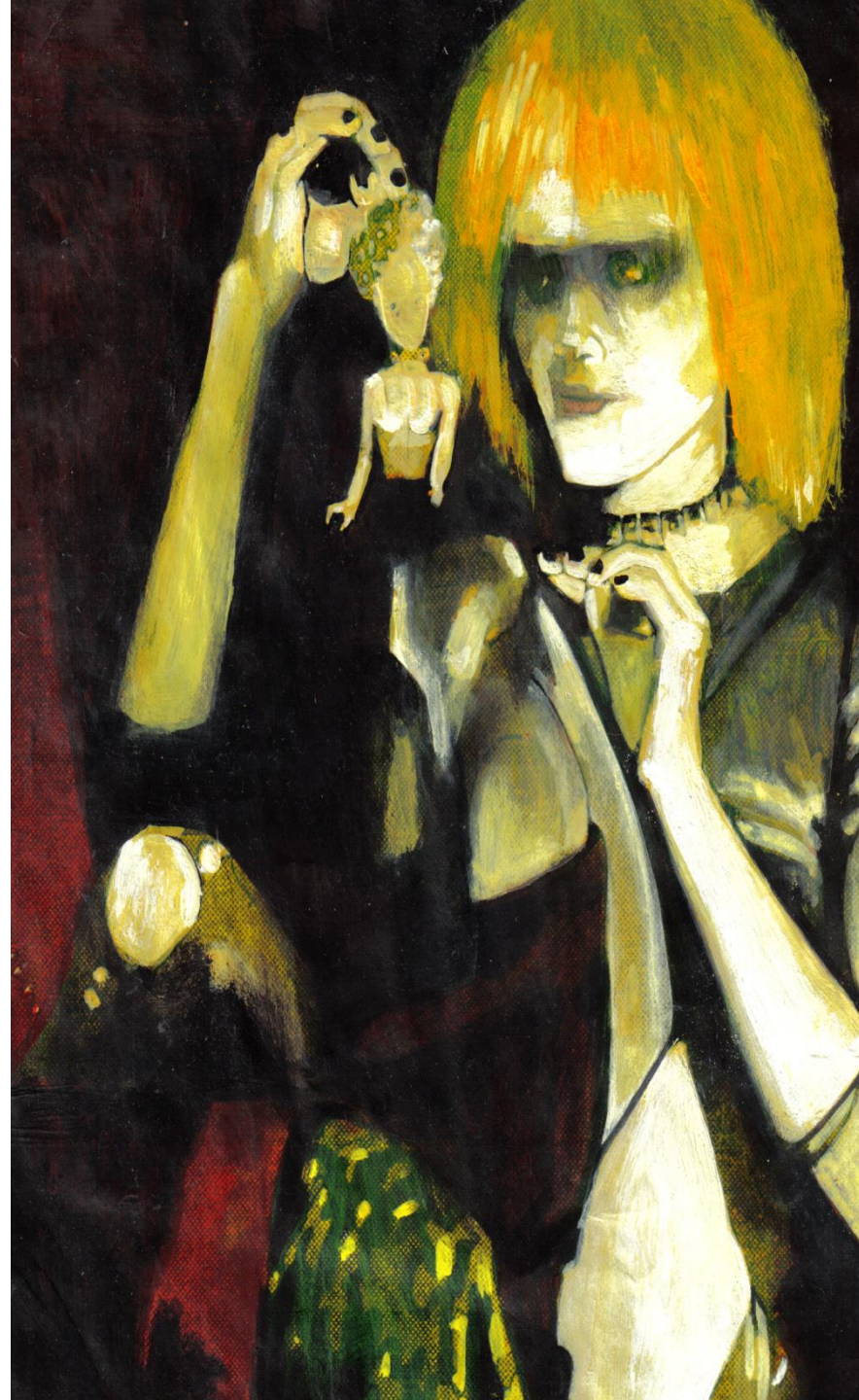
- In *Frankenstein*, the wretch is represented sympathetically as being intelligent and sensitive, but his experiences with humanity transform him into a dark creature.
- His needs and desires are very human: love, companionship and family.





# The Creations

- When we first meet the replicants they are cast in the role of villain, yet as the narrative unfolds we develop empathy for their plight.
- Awareness of finitude and fear of dying are shown as distinctively human traits, along with knowledge of one's past.
- Despite their terrible deeds we realise that at times they were more human than their creators.





# The Wretch

- Influenced by John Locke's 17<sup>th</sup> century essays that argued that when individuals are born they are neither good nor evil, but as they grow their attitudes, values and behavior are shaped by their early sensory experiences.
- Emerges as Adam but becomes the fallen angel hell-bent on revenge and retribution.



# The Wretch

- The monster's experience of cruel rejection by his creator is tempered by his observations of the kind and virtuous DeLacey family.
- *"But my chief delights were the sight of the flowers, the birds, and all the gay apparel of summer"*
- Bible, Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Romans* and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Werther* teach him about the duplicitous nature of humanity.



# The Wretch

- He is the archetypal outsider devoid of family and love, and doomed to be forever rejected and alone. - *“No father had watched my infant days, no mother blessed me with smiles and kisses”* - essay “Of Human Virtue” written in the 18th century by Godwin.
- This instigates self-loathing and a rejection of good, and an embracement of revenge and evil.
- He is last seen by the explorer Robert Walton heading north like Deckard and Rachel *“borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance”*.





# Robert Walton

- Like Deckard, a narrator and a foil for Frankenstein.
- Explores the treacherous North Pole and find an Arctic passage to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.
- Raw, blind ambition and hubris prompts Frankenstein to relay his tale of woe and confront Walton with his flaws.
- He is pursuing that “*country of eternal light*”— unknown and illusive knowledge
- “*How gladly would I sacrifice.*”





# Roy Batty

- *'All he wanted were the same answers any of us want ...'*
- Deckard sees that Roy experiences the same doubts and worries, loves and mysteries, as his own.
- Endowed with strength and intelligence
- We acknowledge or deny humanity in the attitude we adopt towards the 'other'.
- By living longer Roy hopes to become more human, by dying he becomes human.



# Roy Batty

- Sense of self preservation, love for Pris and the seeking out of Tyrell [his father] are all demonstrative of his humanity.
- At the end of his life Roy displays the most enlightened and transcendent of all human emotions, compassion and integrity.
- Like a Christ-like figure, Batty dies for the sins of humanity and the sin of being human - hands an eloquent and moving soliloquy before he dies:

*"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe...All those moments will be lost in time like tears in rain. Time to die."*





# Henry Clerval

- He epitomises the importance of equanimity, empathy and compassion.
- *'I saw the image of my further self'*
- *'His wild and enthusiastic imagination was chastened by the sensibility of his heart.'*





# Deckard

- Deckard (Descartes) has lost his humanity – too much killing and no relationships
- Cold, calculating, ruthless and suspicious
- Roy and Rachel teach him what it means to be human.
- Deckard is changed by Roy's selfless act and his stoic acceptance of his death:  
*"Maybe in those last moments, he loved life more than he had before. Not just his life, anybody's life, my life."*
- Deckard acknowledges that the replicants are just as human, if not more human, than their masters.



- “*Blade Runner* and *Frankenstein* explore the ramifications for humanity when technology is used with a disregard for ethics and morality.”

Discuss the context and values of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and how technology was viewed.

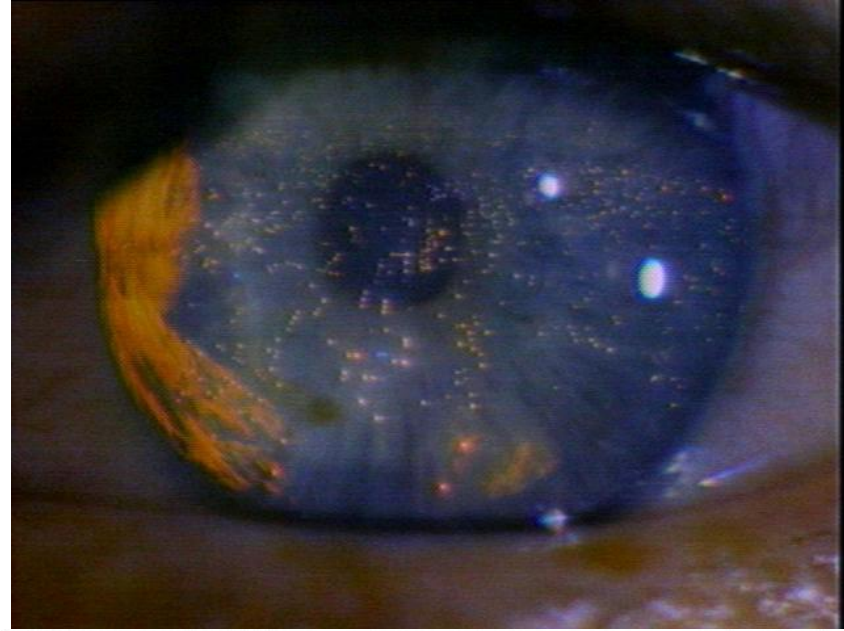
Compare and contrast why and how Tyrell and Frankenstein used technology to push the boundaries of the nature : hubris, myopia, self-aggrandisement...

Analyse the consequences: the creations and the victims, and the ideas that are conveyed.

The meaning conveyed about technology through an analysis of both texts.

# Thesis

- Both *Frankenstein* and *Blade Runner* explore a dilemma that continues to resonate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the ethical and moral tension between the fear of humanity's abuse of technology because of our inherent flaws such as ambition, ego and greed, and the incredible potential for technology to extend life and even defy death.





# Context and Values

## *Frankenstein*

- Science Fiction has its roots in the industrial revolution.
- Discovery of electricity inspired scientists to explore the possibilities of using its forces to restore life to the dead.
- The romantics celebrated imagination and individual freedom.

## *Blade Runner*

- Human actions were threatening nature and the rights and needs of individuals were being overshadowed by the greedy pursuit of profit. This world has been projected forward to a dystopian world in 2019 of globalisation and advanced technology.
- **Technology:** prolonging life, robotics, personal computers, weapons of war

# The Technology

## *Frankenstein*

- Shelley fused legend with technology to craft a nineteenth century who defies God to create a living being.
- Victor lacks the courage or the integrity to deal with what he has created and the consequences of his abuse of technology.
- Walton and Victor's different perspectives represent the context of the times as society was both excited and frightened by the new technologies.

## *Blade Runner*

- Technology has advanced so far that humanity has perfected what Frankenstein started but it has destroyed the natural world.
- The Tyrell Corporation has accrued unquestionable global power and control through technological advances.
- *"Use your new friend as a personal body servant or a tireless field hand...the custom tailored genetically engineered humanoid replicant designed especially for your needs."*

# The Technology

## Frankenstein

- Victor's quest to defeat mortality is relentless and he succeeds in *"discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter."*
- He abandons his family and his values of honesty and integrity, but he does come to realise the tragic ramifications of his ambitions: *"Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge..."*

## Blade Runner

- The viewer is positioned from the establishing sequence of the film within a sterile, mechanised and futuristic world.
- The replicants are a commodity that can be sold and disposed of without compunction. Tyrell cannot conceive why they would expect to live beyond their predetermined life span of four years.
- The line between what it means to be human or non-human is blurred.



- *“The relentless pursuit of the re-creation of life through technology leads to a world devoid of the compassion of women in both Frankenstein and Blade Runner.”*

Compare and contrast the role and treatment of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Compare and contrast how and why Tyrell and Victor have used technology to replace the natural creation of life, and the consequences.

Analyse the representation of women in both texts.

The meaning conveyed about the pursuit of technology and its consequences.

# The Thesis

- The role of women in *Frankenstein* and *Blade Runner* is overshadowed by the actions of men who relentlessly pursue the creation of life through technology. When this right is taken from women their voices are barely heard, the danger of hubris leading to myopia resonates.



# Context and Values

## *Frankenstein*

- Advances in technology and the interest in prolonging life.
- Gender inequality: Women are expected to be subservient, submissive and feminine. No right to vote and limited legal rights.
- Status defined in terms of morality and domesticity.
- Values: compliance, chastity

## *Blade Runner*

- **Technology:** prolonging life and beginning to investigate the possibilities of genetics. Cloning began in 1963 in China with a carp.
- Women still underpaid but have a strong and influential voice.
- Birth of the femme-fatale after WWII – the strong, dangerous female.



# The Women

## *Frankenstein*

- For a novel written by the daughter of an important feminist, *Frankenstein* is strikingly devoid of strong female characters.
- Passive women who suffer calmly and then die: innocent Justine is executed for murder; the creation of the female monster is aborted by Victor because he fears for the future; Elizabeth waits helplessly for Victor to return to her, and she is eventually murdered by the monster.
- Obsessive and destructive behaviour of men is amplified by the women's innocence, inaction and destruction.

## *Blade Runner*

- Technology has been used to replace natural procreation.
- All women are replicants that sexualized by men: Pris is a “basic pleasure model”; Zhora is an erotic dancer; Rachel is a copy of Tyrell's niece.
- The femme-fatales are destroyed.